

Top 12 Email Verification Best Practices + Guide

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Top 12 Email Verification Best Practices

One of your greatest assets as an email marketer is a database full of fresh, accurate, and active email addresses. Unfortunately, unmonitored email collection and management leads to inevitable deliverability problems including bad sender reputation, emails being blocked or marked as spam, and ultimately reduced sales and skewed campaign results.

We designed this resource to help you optimize your email marketing strategy by ensuring the integrity of your email list through [email list verification](#) and [real-time verification](#). We'll review everything you need to know about email verification in a nutshell, and provide our top 12 best practices.

Let's get started!



"If you rely on email marketing as a source of traffic and revenue, **it is imperative that you are acquiring valid email addresses**. Kickbox is a cost-efficient way to help you do that. **You set it and forget it and reap the benefits of a healthy email list.**"

Isamar Batista, VP of Marketing & CRM at Shoedazzle

What is Email Verification?

Before we dive into best practices, let's identify what email verification actually does. An email verification tool can identify the following issues with emails on your list:

- **Email no longer exists:** People change jobs or email providers.
- **Email never existed:** Whether accidentally or on purpose, people make typos and syntax errors when typing their usernames or email service. Or they give a fake address to get something you're offering without subscribing to marketing messages.
- **Email is disposable:** Customers who don't want to get marketing or follow-up emails might use a one-time-only email address service. It gives them a deliverable address that either expires after one use or goes to an account that they'll never check again.
- **Email belongs to a department, not a person:** These addresses exist, but belong to a department (e.g. sales@, info@) instead of a person. This may or may not be important to you depending on your business model.

All of these email addresses have one thing in common: **they don't drive any value for your email program**. These emails clog up your database, depress your email campaign performance metrics, and cause you to waste valuable money and time.

Ultimately, sending to a stale list will damage your inbox placement. Campaigns with a lot of invalid email addresses get directed straight to the spam folder by many ISPs. Email verification can help you clean your lists of these pesky clogs and ensure smooth sailing by identifying the quality of every email on your list.

12 best practices for email verification

Email verification is a best practice for managing your email database. Here's how you can get the best results for your time and effort.

1. Do not buy email addresses

Before we get into the details of email verification, we had to add this foundational best practice. Buying email addresses for marketing purposes may seem like a quick and easy way to expand your reach, but it's a practice that can lead to many negative consequences.

Purchasing email lists can harm your company's reputation: People who haven't voluntarily signed up to receive emails from your company are likely to view your messages as spam. This can lead to a significant number of complaints and unsubscribes, which can damage your brand's image and trustworthiness.

Beyond upsetting your recipients, sending unsolicited emails violates the guidelines set by many email service providers: It can also breach laws such as the CAN-SPAM Act in the U.S. or GDPR in Europe. Violating these regulations can result in hefty fines and penalties.

Your campaign analytics will suffer and often inaccurately represent the success of your campaign due to bad email addresses: Many of the addresses might be outdated or fake, leading to high bounce rates. Even if some of the addresses are valid, the recipients are unlikely to be interested in your offerings since they didn't opt-in to your list. This can result in low open and click-through rates, skewing your campaign analytics and making it harder to gauge the success of your marketing efforts.

Ultimately, sending to a purchased list will destroy your ability to send marketing emails in the future: Buying email lists will negatively impact your email deliverability. Email service providers monitor the quality of your email list and your sender reputation. If you're continually sending emails to invalid addresses or getting flagged as spam, your emails might start going straight to the recipients' spam folders, reducing the effectiveness of your campaigns and potentially flagging you as an untrustworthy sender forever.

While buying email addresses might seem like a shortcut to reaching more people, it's a strategy that can do more harm than good. Instead, focus on building your own email list organically through methods like content marketing, social media promotion, and lead magnets. This way, you'll create a list of engaged and interested subscribers who are more likely to become loyal customers. Which brings us directly to our next best practice!

2. Determine whether you need email verification

As an email marketer, one of the most critical decisions you need to make is determining whether you need email verification. The truth is, not every situation demands email verification. If you're a small business with a relatively small and vetted list of people you

personally know, you probably don't need to verify. If your list is built through personal interactions and your bounce rate is consistently low, email verification may seem unnecessary.

On the other hand, scenarios that demand email verification are more ubiquitous. If you're gathering addresses in any volume, particularly through online forms, email verification is essential. If you're noticing a high bounce rate, experiencing poor deliverability, or if your emails are being marked as spam, email verification is a must. It's also necessary if you've inherited an old list, if you're embarking on a new email marketing strategy, or if you've experienced a sudden drop in email engagement.

It's also possible that you may not need to verify your email lists because a real-time email verification API is a better choice. List verification is useful when you have an existing list that you want to clean up. It helps to identify and remove invalid or risky emails from your list, improving your overall deliverability. On the other hand, Real-time verification API is perfect for preventing problematic emails from entering your list in the first place.

We'll cover a real-time API in another section, but in short an API works at the point of capture, verifying email addresses as they are entered into your system. This method is ideal if you're collecting addresses at a high volume or from various online sources, ensuring only valid and deliverable addresses make it to your list.

Determining whether you need email verification and understanding the best verification method to use depends on your overall email marketing strategy, the size and source of your list, and your deliverability goals.

3. Fix Your Data Acquisition Practices

One of the oldest rules in computer programming is "Garbage in, garbage out." Setting up your forms and physical collection systems to gather only valid, desirable email addresses will help you maintain and improve the quality of your email database. You can do this by utilizing real-time validation during the collection process.

- Add a "did you mean" check that detects errors and prompts users to correct them before they submit their forms.
- Create a rule to reject certain classes of email addresses (those from disposable services, for example).

It's essential to aim for your customer's primary email address; these are the ones they value the most and use with trusted contacts. If your database contains too many inactive secondary or "burner" email addresses, consider updating your request language to emphasize the benefits and security measures associated with using their primary address.

Remember, your goal is not just to collect email addresses but to receive the best possible ones.

4. Choose a Reliable Email Verification Tool

If you've never used a high-performance email verification tool, or if you've been disappointed by other vendors, here's a list of 10 features to look for when choosing an email verification service.

1. Ease of use
2. API integrations with ESPs and marketing tools
3. Email address analysis beyond validity/invalidity
4. Transparency about cost structure
5. Data transmission security and protection
6. Realistic deliverability/accuracy guarantee
7. Real-time verification
8. Compliance with global data laws
9. User support
10. Solid track record and standing in the email industry

Don't just trust anyone with your valuable lists. Save time and money getting valuable results by choosing the right tool the first time.

Verify your list with Kickbox

Get 100 free credits when you sign up today!

[Get started](#)

5. Transmit Your Data Securely

Trust is essential at every level of email marketing. Your subscribers need to trust that you will protect their email addresses and use them the way you promise in your privacy statements. In turn, you as the marketer must be able to trust your verification service provider with your precious email address list.

Never go with an email verification service that asks you to send your list via email to verify. This is both tremendously insecure and makes you vulnerable to data theft.

A reputable verification service provider will offer multiple integrations through email service or marketing automation providers. Kickbox integrates with more than 25 top email platforms, from Iterable to Klaviyo, as well as HubSpot, Mailchimp, Marketo and [more](#). We are also GDPR and CCPA compliant, keeping your data safe.

6. Be Purposeful & Strategic

How often should you verify your entire email address list? As with many tech issues, the answer is “It depends.” The larger and/or older your list is, and the more entry points you have for it (email opt-in forms on your website, additions from customer service reps or store personnel, content or entry forms and the like), the more often you should verify it.

If you add batch or real-time verification, these services will work to reduce address decay in your database. Nevertheless, you should verify your lists before you go into a heavy email period such as the fourth quarter holiday season.

Regular list hygiene at your ESP level will also extend your verification efforts. That includes removing hard-bouncing emails immediately, keeping on top of inactive email addresses and avoiding risky practices like batch and blast or mass emailing, buying email lists or using sketchy co-registration services.

7. Use a Real-time Email Verification API

This may be the most valuable best practice you can follow. To make email verification even simpler and give you peace of mind for the quality of your lists, use a [real-time email verification API](#).

Sign Up

example@gmail.com *close done*

Invalid email, try again. Success!

An email verification API validates emails in real-time as the customer submits them on a form. It checks for typos, correct syntax, and domain existence, ensuring only valid emails are captured. This prevents typos and fake and invalid emails from ever reaching your list in the first place. Having a real-time verification API run on your forms helps you automatically reduce your bounce rates and enhance your email marketing effectiveness automatically, so you don't have to remember to verify manually.

You can integrate a real-time email verification API at many different points on the customer journey to collect high-quality, deliverable, and valued email addresses. Here's a list of places you could add a real-time verification API:

- Email opt-in forms
- At account creation/sign up
- Contest entries
- On forms for gated or VIP content
- Free or demo versions of premium services
- POS systems in physical locations (stores, at events, etc.)
- Event registration

- Product or service giveaways
- Customer service requests
- App registrations
- Business forms
- CRM system

Want to know more about the Kickbox API?

Block invalid emails from ever reaching your list

[Learn more](#)

8. Combine Verification Methods for Greatest Reliability

Think of this like stacking a 20%-off coupon on top of a buy one/get one free deal at a store to get a bigger discount. One verification method by itself will help you improve your email results, but combining them with one or two others will deliver a bigger and longer-lasting impact.

Bulk verification – sending your entire email list through the verification process – is a great start. Email experts recommend verifying email addresses in your lists regularly. But it's also important to keep unwanted email addresses out of your database in between cleanings.

Combine regular whole-list verification with one or more targeted services. Batch verification can verify all email addresses collected in a specific time period, such as daily or weekly, while real-time verification, as we just covered, vets each address as the user types it into your form.

These two services don't mean you can skip verifying your entire list because they won't address the quality of addresses already on your list or addresses that become invalid over time, such as addresses that owners abandon without unsubscribing as well as list degradation.

9. Understand Your Results

In order for email verification to be a success, you must understand your results. Here's how Kickbox results break down.

Deliverable: This is a correctly formatted email address that corresponds to working email accounts. Beyond those basic requirements, Kickbox has also applied its proprietary analysis to determine if you can safely send to this address.

Undeliverable: This email address is invalid, either because it was formatted incorrectly (“”, “ABCgmailcom”, “ABC@gmail” and the like), or it goes to a closed or otherwise nonexistent account.

Risky: The email address is formatted right, and the account is valid, but the email itself is low quality and could result in a bounce or low engagement because it goes to an “accept all” domain, is a role account or could be a disposable address.

Unknown: The mail server for this email address didn’t return a response when Kickbox checked it. That can happen if the mail server is too slow to respond or is unavailable. Kickbox will retry the address several times before classifying it as unknown.

10. Understand How Risky Results Break Down

The four primary results we just covered give you the health of your list at a glance. To understand what to do with your Risky results, you’ll need to understand the three ways Risky emails breakdown.

Accept-All: A domain set up to accept all email sent to it, even if the address doesn’t actually exist. Sending a message to an invalid address at an accept-all domain (or catch-all domain) is risky because it could raise your bounce rate or lower your open rate. You also get less data about that email address because the domain might not send you a bounce notice for an invalid address.

Disposable: A one-time-only email address created by using a service like Trashmail or Mailinator. Although the address is valid, messages sent to it get discarded so engagement is extremely low or non-existent.

Role: An email address associated with a job, title or function instead of a person, such as “” or “.” It’s valid, but it can be owned by several people. Engagement probably is low, and it’s a potential spam-complaint threat.

11. Make the Right Changes Based on Your Results

Like a report card, email verification provides you a report with the health of your list. Once you have your results, it’s up to you to decide what changes you need to make to fix your list. Kickbox allows you to download results for all or parts of your verified database. Some labels may be more straightforward, like removing any Undeliverable emails. But other labels like Risky or Unknown can be more of a gray area. What should you do?

We recommend that you download these results rather than pull them out of your database permanently. But, instead of putting them back in with your Deliverable addresses right away, segment them and analyze past and current activity to see whether the address owners are opening and acting on your addresses.

After monitoring these segments, email addresses that show activity similar to opens, clicks, and conversions among your Deliverable addresses should be safe for sending.

Here's how this best practice breaks down. You essentially have two options when it comes to making changes based on your results:

- **When to Remove an Email Address:** This is a must for every address found to be Undeliverable or Disposable. Mailing to Undeliverable or Disposable addresses will damage your sender reputation, keeping you out of the inbox and possibly even preventing your emails from being delivered at all. If you're wanting to reach a specific person and not a department, you may also want to remove any addresses that are labeled as Role.
- **When to Segment and Test:** Email addresses that are labeled as Accept All or Unknown could still provide value. Instead of just removing them from your database, you can isolate and test those email addresses to see if they generate any favorable activity like opens, clicks or conversions.

12. Know When to Ask for Deliverability Help

Knowing when to ask for deliverability help is an important best practice to consider. If you're regularly experiencing low deliverability rates, high bounce rates, or your emails are being marked as spam despite your best efforts, it might be time to go beyond email verification and seek professional assistance.

We recommend that a verification customer consider pursuing [Kickbox deliverability consulting](#) when they've tried numerous strategies and tactics to improve their deliverability rates, yet the issues persist. This could include situations where they've already cleaned and verified their email list, adjusted their email content to avoid spam filters, and followed all known best practices but aren't seeing significant improvements.

Our deliverability experts at Kickbox provide a deep dive into your email program and identify the root causes of your deliverability issues. We can offer expert advice tailored to your specific situation and help you implement strategies to improve your deliverability rates.

Additionally, if you're planning a major email campaign, undergoing a significant change in your email strategy, or have recently experienced a sudden drop in deliverability rates, it would be beneficial to partner with our consultants or even request a [deliverability audit](#). Their expertise can help you navigate these changes effectively and ensure your emails reach their intended recipients.

In short, when you're facing stubborn deliverability issues or navigating significant changes in your email strategy, it's time to seek help from a deliverability consultant like Kickbox. Our consultants' specialized knowledge can help you overcome challenges and maximize the success of your email marketing efforts.

Are you struggling with deliverability?

Our expert consultants work directly with you to diagnose the problem and provide actionable solutions

[Learn more](#)

A Note for High Volume Senders

Are you a high-volume sender, an enterprise company with a giant email list? Managing a vast email database comes with its own set of unique challenges. High-volume senders are more likely to be impacted by bad addresses than those with smaller lists, and manually verifying your lists can be impractical. Sending to large lists puts you at a higher risk of being blocklisted. Therefore, high-volume senders must rely on multiple verification methods and more frequent verifications.

Relying on bulk verification alone isn't realistic when your list has seven or eight-figure email addresses. If you have this many addresses, it's likely you're collecting addresses from various locations, increasing the need for real-time validation to catch invalid emails at the point of entry.

We accommodate our big senders by offering multiple levels of service including team accounts and management solutions for [agencies and enterprise companies](#). We also emphasize strong security measures at Kickbox, complying with GDPR and the EU-US Privacy Shield. These protect your data during the entire verification process, adhering to government and industry-level data transmission and usage requirements.

If you're a high volume sender and would like to request a demo, learn more about email verification or find out about special enterprise pricing options, please contact us at [\[email protected\]](#).

Start Verifying Today

[Email list verification](#) is like getting a regular physical. We run tests on your data, diagnose the problems and recommend how to fix them and then how to avoid them. Just like you always return for an annual physical every year, we recommend you verify your email list at a regular pace that makes sense for your business, typically every 90 days or less, although this timing can fluctuate depending on the size and needs of your business. Regular verification keeps your email campaigns healthy, so you can focus on the marketing you do best.

We hope these email verification best practices helped you understand the processes and procedures that go into full-service verification, how it can benefit your company now and how a strong database of deliverable email addresses will help it grow and prosper.

We would love to answer your questions and discuss your verification needs in greater detail and even take you on a no-obligation test drive Kickbox.

[View All Resources](#)

Section Overview

Ready to start verifying?

Sign up for a free Kickbox account and get 100 credits to test

[Get started for free](#)